

A NOTE ON THE PUBLICATION DATE OF 'THE BUTTERFLIES OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA ...' BY M.J. PARSONS

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Abstract

The date of publication of M.J. Parsons' 'The butterflies of Papua New Guinea: their systematics and biology' is shown to be October 1998, not 1999 as indicated by the copyright citation in the book.

Discussion

Michael Parsons' recent book, *The butterflies of Papua New Guinea: their systematics and biology*, published by Academic Press in London is, and will surely remain, the standard work on Papua New Guinea butterflies for the foreseeable future. Since publication it has been cited in a number of entomological papers in the specialist press and it will not have escaped notice that the year of publication has been cited as both '1999' and '1998', in approximately equal measure.

The reason for this disparity is easily explained. On one hand, the Academic Press copyright date, incorporated in British Library and associated catalogue data, is 1999, and is given as such in the book. On the other hand, the volume was available for purchase by the public in 1998; for example, it was available in the bookshop of The Natural History Museum, London, in October 1998. Since there are no new taxa described in the book, a precise date of publication may be considered of little more than passing interest, but it does contain a number of 'taxonomic acts', including what amounts to revision of several butterfly groups. The actual date of publication is therefore potentially important. In view of the time that can be spent in researching the actual publication date of 'historic' scientific works, it is considered useful to resolve this issue now.

The commissioning editor for the volume was Andrew Richford, formerly of Academic Press and now of Elsevier, who has been most helpful in discussing publication of the book. He confirms that the actual release date was 15 October 1998 and this date may be used to establish taxonomic precedence. The copyright date of 1999 follows common commercial practice, whereby books published late in the year are copyrighted to the year following to ensure maximum promotional exposure and optimum listing by dealers as a 'new' publication. The copyright date is used in all formal bibliographical references and, in the opinion of Andrew Richford, is the correct citation of this publication.

There is some potential for confusion here and, since it is inescapable that the *actual* publication date of the book was October 1998, it is suggested that future citations for this volume should be either '1998' or '1999 (1998)'.

Reference

PARSONS, M.J. 1998. *The butterflies of Papua New Guinea: their systematics and biology*. Academic Press, London; xvi + 736 pp, xxvi + 136 pls.